

PERSONAL STUDY

HOME - Week of December 24

Introduction

After seventy years in Babylonian exile, God fulfills His word through the prophet Jeremiah and brings his people home (2 Chronicles 36:21). Cyrus of Persia issues a decree that all conquered exiles return to their homeland. This miraculous edict gives the Judeans freedom to return to the land of Israel, and per Cyrus' request, rebuild the Temple of the LORD (see Ezra 1:1-7, Isaiah 44:28). The returning Jews lay the foundation of the Temple with great enthusiasm; but soon economic duress, enemy opposition, harassment, change in power, and letters of threat cause God's people to become discouraged and abandon their work for nearly two decades (Ezra 4).

The journey home *for any of us* is nearly always accompanied by hardship, setbacks, enemy threats and negative voices. Perhaps you and your family have experienced challenges in simply trying to find a place to call home. Perhaps after making a home, you find that making peace within the walls of your home is the most difficult task. Peace is a gift and itself a great miracle. Though the journey home is replete with challenges, *the Lord is with us*; Scripture says: "the joy of the Lord is our strength!" (Nehemiah 8:10) The returning exiles had to learn that God's presence *is* the joy in the journey. Like the people of Israel and Judah, we too must learn that Emmanuel is ready to show up in the most horrific of circumstances... *if* we invite him in.

Background

During the second year of king Darius' reign, during the days of Zerubbabel and Jeshua the high priest, the returned exiles get back to rebuilding the Temple. "Be strong, all you people still left in the land. And now get to work, for I am with you, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid" (Haggai 2:4b-5). Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the governor appointed by king Darius, was of royal descent and in the lineage of Christ (see Matthew 1:12). Jeshua the priest, though sinful, like all of us, was *a brand plucked from the fire* (Zechariah 3:2) – a symbol of things to come.

Read Zechariah 3:1-10 and 6:9-15

The prophet Zechariah is given a vision of One holding a unique dual office of king *and* priest. This coming One, the Branch, "...will branch out from where he is and

build the Temple of the LORD. Yes, he will build the Temple of the LORD. Then he will receive royal honor and will rule as king from his throne. He will also serve as priest from his throne, and there will be perfect harmony between his two roles" (Zechariah 6:12b-13). Like the order of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18, Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:15-17) God's Word reveals that ultimately Christ fulfills this beautiful dual role: King who loves and cares for his people and Priest who intercedes for those in his care. Christ was born into this world in the humblest of circumstances. He, of all people, understands the journey home is filled with hardship.

Read Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-7, Matthew 2:13-23

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
2. What stands out to you in these verses from Matthew, Luke, and Zechariah?

As the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encourage the returned exiles, God's Spirit assists them in continuing their work of rebuilding God's house (Ezra 5:1-2, Haggai 1:12-15, Zechariah 1:16-17).

"It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. Nothing not even a mighty mountain, will stand in Zerubbabel's way; it will become a level plain before him! And when Zerubbabel sets the final stone of the Temple in place, the people will shout: 'May God bless it! May God bless it!' ... Zerubbabel is the one who laid the foundation of this Temple, and he will complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of Heaven's Armies has sent me. Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand" (Zechariah 4:6-7a, 8-10).

In Closing

We are called to lead our families in this journey home. Are you living in the ways of Christ? Like our King and Priest, we are called to care for the flock over whom we have been given charge; as priests over our home, we can pray and intercede for our family members. Perhaps like Job, you need to rise early and offer sacrifices *just in case* your household has sinned against the Lord (Job 1:5). Like Daniel (Daniel 6:10) perhaps you need to raise your window facing the Temple in Jerusalem – *the real one in heaven* (Psalm 99:1-2) – and intercede for your nation in exile. Perhaps like Jesus in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-36) God is calling you to make a sacrifice and you need strength to accomplish it. Give yourself to the One who loves you and has blazed the trail before you. He is the Christ of God, your King. And he is thinking about you and praying for you even now. He is Emmanuel, *God with us*.

New Sermon Series Begins Jan. 7



MOVING THE NEEDLE

This series will empower us to move the spiritual needle in our lives, our relationships and our family. In addition to the new series on Jan. 7, we will begin 21 Days of Fasting & Prayer as we start the New Year.

Then on Jan. 28 Christ Church presents:



GOING THE DISTANCE

This series will reveal spiritual principles which will help restore and renew our relationships with family, spouses, coworkers and peers. You don't want to miss this potentially life changing series!

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

December 24: Zechariah 6:1-7:14, Revelation 15:1-8, Psalm 143:1-12, Prov. 30:24-28
December 25: Zechariah 8:1-23, Revelation 16:1-21, Psalm 144:1-15, Prov.30:29-31
December 26: Zechariah 9:1-17, Revelation 17:1-18, Psalm 145:1-21, Proverbs 30:32
December 27: Zechariah 10:1-11:17, Revelation 18:1-24, Psalm 146:1-10, Prov. 30:33
December 28: Zechariah 12:1-13:9, Revelation 19:1-21, Psalm 147:1-20, Prov. 31:1-7
December 29: Zechariah 14:1-21, Revelation 20:1-15, Psalm 148:1-14, Prov. 31:8-9
December 30: Malachi 1:1-2:17, Revelation 21:1-27, Psalm 149:1-9, Prov. 31:10-24

HOME

Text: Zechariah 6:9-15, 7:1-9

1. Zechariah asks, are we fasting and mourning for _____?
2. Zechariah communicates the coming of the Messiah, the Branch, provides our _____ home.

PLAIN TRUTH

We will always be in _____ of a home until we claim _____ as our _____.

3. This "Branch", the Messiah would be both King and _____.

Evening of December 24, 2023